

One of Satan's Greatest Lies: How *Replacement Theology* has Rejected and Perverted the LORD's Prophetic Purpose for Israel

by Jeremy James



*...thou bearest not the root,
but the root thee.*

Romans 11:18

Christ described Satan as both a liar and a murderer from the start. This would suggest that he is supremely skilful at exercising both of these diabolical functions. The Puritans were keenly aware of his powers of deception and their writings are full of warnings in this regard. But preachers in our modern era have, in the main, neglected or seriously underestimated his ongoing involvement in human affairs.

Today large segments of the church are in a truly wretched condition, largely because so many Christians are unable to see through the countless layers of deception that Satan is using to confuse and beguile his victims.

When I was saved I was struck by the remarkable series of promises that the LORD had made to the children of Israel, as recorded in his Holy Word. However, when discussing these doctrinal issues for the first time with born-again Christians, I was stunned to find that many of them did not believe that these promises still applied to Israel. Instead, they said, the promises had been removed en bloc from Israel and given to the church. And yet, when I pressed for a scriptural justification for this opinion, their replies made very little sense.

As a newly saved person, I had read the Bible as a literal text. I assumed that God had said in a fairly straightforward manner what he intended we should understand, and that His words were to be taken very much at face value. Though I did not realise it at the time, I was following Cooper's Golden Rule of Biblical Interpretation:

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

So what had my new Christian friends done that I had not done? They had adopted the view, perhaps without giving the matter much thought, that parts of the Bible were literal and parts were allegorical. In the former case, they took the Bible to mean what it plainly said but that, in the latter, they believed it meant something other than what it plainly said and that the literal meaning should be disregarded.

There were huge problems with this in my view. Firstly, how did they know which parts of the Bible were allegorical and which were not? And who decides what the 'real' meaning is? Secondly, I was struck by the fact that most of the parts which they had decided were allegorical were those which pertained to God's ongoing relationship with the children of Israel. Why would the LORD address the future of his chosen people in a vague and poetic manner when he had always addressed the other phases of their history in very literal and specific terms?

Moreover, it struck me as bizarre that so many sincere Christians could accept as literal only those Biblical prophecies which had already been fulfilled but would treat as allegorical those which had yet to be fulfilled.

Something was seriously wrong. Vast portions of Scripture were being pushed into an allegorical dead-end and denied any ongoing validity, except to the extent that they might possibly be applicable to the church. What is more, countless passages in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah and many other places could not be applied to the church without being subjected to obvious distortion, while others were rendered so vague and non-specific that they seemed to add nothing to the Word of God. This was especially evident in those passages where the LORD was using robust language and powerful images to convey what was clearly a very specific message.

The Five-word Proposition

All of this confusion could be traced to just one proposition, namely that *the church has replaced Israel*. Incredibly, on the basis of this highly contentious proposition, millions of professing Christians were fully prepared to disregard or dismiss the plain meaning of God's Holy Word in countless passages of Scripture.

If it is without foundation, then this five-word proposition must surely qualify as one of Satan's greatest and most successful lies. Through it he has succeeded in

1. Separating the Jewish people forever from the unconditional promises that God had made to them.
2. Allegorising extensive passages of scripture – possibly ten percent or more of the Bible – and giving them a meaning that, in the majority of instances, is inconsistent or even in conflict with the rest of scripture.
3. Raising the possibility that God can make promises which he cannot keep.
4. Raising the possibility that God's sovereign will can be thwarted by something that man might or might not do.
5. Raising the possibility that other parts of scripture are also allegorical and thereby turning the Word of God into something that only theologians can interpret.
6. Completely destroying the prophetic relevance of the Book of Revelation.

When one considers that two of Satan's principal objectives are the annihilation of the Jewish people and the destruction of God's Holy Word, then the five-word lie is truly a demonic masterpiece. It even gets believers to question whether God will ultimately honour his promises to those who are saved. After all, if he can make numerous covenants with His chosen people, covenants of the most glorious kind, and then utterly cut them off without recourse, then the extent to which His promises can be taken literally is called seriously into question.

What could be more pleasing to Satan?

While I am not suggesting for one moment that someone who subscribes to Replacement Theology is in any sense lacking in integrity – since many wonderful Christians believe in this deception – I am definitely questioning the logic of their position and urging them to re-examine it very closely (and prayerfully). This paper is designed to motivate fellow believers in this regard and to provide them with a concise and objective account of the disturbing nature and corrosive implications of Replacement Theology.

The Birth of Replacement Theology

To fully appreciate why so many well-regarded theologians have accepted the five-word proposition, we need to go all the way back to Apostolic times. Until one sees the extent to which, historically speaking, this broad interpretation has been shaped by racial jealousy and religious politics, the passion with which it has been defended can be difficult to understand. After all, why should the most radical and extensive reinterpretation of the plain word of scripture pertain almost exclusively to just one subject, namely the future status of Israel?

Tensions between Mosaic Judaism and the church existed from the beginning. The legalists of the Roman Catholic Church, which was then in formation, exploited and increased these tensions for their own purpose. Jews were traditionally exempt from persecution under the laws of ancient Rome, while Christians, by refusing to recognise the Emperor as a god or as god's representative on earth, were treated as a sect hostile to the state. Early Christians tried to describe themselves as a branch or off-shoot of Judaism in order to avail of the clemency provided under Roman law, but the jurists did not accept this argument. Ecclesiastic power-brokers were able to exploit this injustice or lack of parity under the law to widen the gap between Mosaic Jews and the Gentile church.

Relations between Christians and Jews were also damaged by the ill-advised Jewish attempt to throw off the Roman yoke during the so-called Bar Kochba revolt of 132-135 AD. A leading rabbi had foolishly declared that the leader of the revolt, one Simon Bar Kochba, was the long-awaited Messiah. While many Christians of Jewish origin would have been willing to support a revolt under Jewish leadership, they could not participate in a campaign led by a false Messiah. Given that the failure of this revolt led to the destruction of the Jewish nation and her dispersal to all corners of the Empire, the lack of active military support from Christians of Hebrew origin gave rise to considerable resentment among the Jews.



The fall of Jerusalem in the first Jewish revolt and the wholesale destruction of her Temple in 70 AD led many Christian theologians to conclude that, as God had abolished the system of Mosaic sacrifices, he had also terminated his covenant with those Jews – by far the majority – who had failed to accept the Gospel. So, even though the church consisted almost exclusively of ethnic Jews in the early decades of her existence, and the early church leaders were all of Jewish birth, a major shift in its organisation and leadership took place after 70 AD. Gentile leaders acquired far greater influence in the church and Gentile theologians began to reinterpret the Old Testament in an increasingly non-Jewish manner.

Since many of these theologians were schooled in Greek philosophy, and were greatly influenced by the pagan mindset which underpinned it, the shift away from the Judaic perspective accelerated. The Jews were gradually portrayed as unworthy recipients of God's favour in the preceding age. Given their role in the crucifixion of Christ, and their failure thereafter to convert to Christianity, they were perceived, not simply as lost sinners who had been deceived by Satan, but as craven participants in a great evil who were now consigned to a wretched existence while still on earth and to well-deserved damnation in eternity.

If God had rejected the Jews and revoked his covenant with them, then surely they should have been utterly destroyed and not simply scattered throughout the then known world? Why had God preserved them? Initially this question had bothered the bishops and theologians, but they concluded that God must have allowed the Jews to survive, and their disgrace to be manifest throughout the empire, as visible evidence of the severity of His judgment. In short, this is what happens to those who reject the Messiah.

This contemptuous and often hostile attitude increasingly found its way into the writings and sermons of the most influential bishops of the early church. Consider for example the following rants by one of the most esteemed theologians of his time, John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople (d.407):

“The Jews sacrifice their children to Satan...they are worse than wild beasts. The synagogue is a brothel, a den of scoundrels, the temple of demons devoted to idolatrous cults, a criminal assembly of Jews, a place of meeting for the assassins of Christ, a house of ill fame, a dwelling of iniquity, a gulf and abyss of perdition.”

“The Jews have fallen into a condition lower than the vilest animal. Debauchery and drunkenness have brought them to the level of the lusty goat and the pig. They know only one thing: to satisfy their stomachs, to get drunk, to kill, and beat each other up like stage villains and coachmen.”

“The synagogue is a curse, obstinate in her error, she refuses to see or hear, she has deliberately perverted her judgment; she has extinguished with herself the light of the Holy Spirit.”

Many similar denunciations by leading churchmen of the time are on record. Virtually all of the so-called ‘church fathers’ – who laid the theological foundations of the Roman Catholic church – expressed their contempt for the Jewish people. These included Justin Martyr, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, Hilary of Poitiers, Cyprian of Carthage, Ignatius of Antioch, and Origen of Alexandria.

The Political Motivation behind Replacement Theology

The theology of the early church and the so-called ‘church fathers’ was shaped in part by political considerations. These included the creation of an ‘apostolic succession,’ whereby certain bishops could be deemed to possess the same authority as the original Apostles and were therefore entitled to exercise wide-ranging control over the church and its teachings. This power structure eventually evolved into the Papacy, where the bishop of Rome became the Pontifex Maximus, a pagan title previously held by the Roman emperors.

For this to work, all possible alternatives would have to be suppressed, in particular any potential challenge by the Jewish community. Since the Apostles and their principal disciples were all Jewish, their descendants could claim to have inherited or to possess some form of ecclesiastic authority. This could never be allowed. The Jews would have to be discredited, both individually and as a nation. And the best way to do this would be to claim that any spiritual status or election that the Jews had formerly possessed had now passed in its entirety to the church. In short, the church had replaced Israel. What is more, the replacement would be regarded, not simply as an accident of history, but as a divinely ordained event.

Since the Bible contained a wealth of prophetic verses pertaining to the ultimate salvation of the Jews as a nation and to God’s unconditional promises in this regard, not to mention their future triumphant return to the land of Israel, it became necessary to neutralise such scriptural passages and replace them in each instance with a plausible alternative meaning. To a large extent the five-word proposition, ‘the church has replaced Israel,’ gave a basis for doing this. But some of these passages were so literal and emphatic that a further device was needed. This became the allegorical method of Biblical interpretation. Even if its rules were unclear and its results unconvincing, the main aim was achieved. The literal meaning of God’s promises to Jacob and his descendants forever was drowned in a sea of poetic ambiguity.

The text of scripture could be interpreted only as the theologians directed. This led in due course to the official suppression of the Bible itself, where only members of the Roman clergy could possess a copy. Their exclusive control over God’s Word was reinforced by condemning the masses to a low level of literacy and forbidding the translation of the Bible into a local dialect. Latin was a foreign language to most people, so the Vulgate, the Rome-approved translation of the Bible, was unintelligible to all but senior monks and clerics.

The Power of Indoctrination

The insidious nature of Replacement Theology is much easier to understand when one sees where it came from and why the ‘church’ – meaning the Roman Catholic church – routinely employed indoctrination and propaganda, along with a severe form of censorship, to maintain social control. When seen in this light, Replacement Theology is not a ‘theology’ at all but an expedient way of bolstering the power of Rome.

This long-running indoctrination was so effective that even exceptional religious reformers like Luther and Calvin were unable to see through it. Obviously they understood that much of what Rome taught was mischievous nonsense, but they didn't go far enough in their analysis. Both were members of the Roman Catholic intelligentsia before they rebelled, and as former priests, they were long schooled in the official view that Jews were vile degenerates incapable of redemption. Visceral contempt of this kind, instilled from childhood, is very hard to shake off, and neither Luther nor Calvin succeeded in questioning this aspect of their beliefs. As a result Replacement Theology was retained by both Calvinism (the Reformed or Presbyterian church) and the Anglican/Episcopalian church.

Today only a handful of Christian churches reject Replacement Theology. The rest teach it to their flock. Consequently tens of millions of well-meaning Christians around the world are being deceived by Satan's five-word lie. The implications of this for the church as a whole are very disturbing. Instead of supporting the will of God in a matter which they know – or ought to know – is VERY close to His heart, substantial numbers are actively resisting Him.

The foundation of Israel as an independent state and Jewish homeland in 1948 should have been a bone-shaking wake-up call for Christians everywhere, but few seemed to recognise its remarkable significance. Prophecy was being fulfilled right before their eyes, but the vast majority of Christians didn't really seem to care.

This rejection of the LORD's prophetic purpose for Israel also has serious implications for individual Christians. Our prayer life and our daily relationship with the LORD is intimately bound up with our understanding and acceptance of scripture, the express will of God. If there are passages in scripture that we have difficulty understanding, we are expected to take them to the LORD in prayer and seek the light of understanding. This ought to be obvious and yet millions of Christians today are perfectly willing to dismiss or disregard large parts of the Bible by viewing them exclusively through the lens of Replacement Theology.

Did it never occur to them that God may have meant exactly what he said and that the five-word lie was a vile deception?

It is even more startling when preachers and pastors teach this doctrine without ever bothering to examine it in detail for themselves. If they did, they would surely see how much harm they can do by blindly accepting a proposition which, if unfounded, can erase, diminish or corrupt large portions of God's Holy Word.

Having said that, let's now examine what the LORD really intended by his prophetic statements about Israel and why Replacement Theology cannot possibly be true.

God's Covenants with Israel

There is a long established principle of Bible interpretation, accepted by scholars and expositors for generations, namely that the frequency with which a matter is mentioned in Scripture is a measure of its relative importance. This holds whether the repetition is in the same chapter, the same book, or another book. In God's eyes, the Bible is one book and He is its sole author. He underlines the importance he attaches to certain truths or principles by repeating them. We are meant to take this into consideration in our study of scripture and to appreciate its relevance.

On this basis, one would expect words like *faith*, *hope*, *charity*, *sin*, *sacrifice* and *salvation* to figure prominently, and they do. The following table lists the frequency with which they occur throughout the Bible [Authorised or King James Version]:

Word	Frequency
<i>faith</i>	247 times
<i>hope</i>	130
<i>charity / love</i>	339
<i>sin</i>	448
<i>sacrifice</i>	297
<i>salvation</i>	164
TOTAL	1625

Now compare the above table with the following one:

Word	Frequency
<i>Israel</i>	2576 times
<i>Jacob</i>	377
<i>David</i>	1139
<i>Jerusalem</i>	814
<i>Abraham</i>	250
<i>'My people'</i>	217
TOTAL	5373

Does this not tell us something? Using a basic principle of Biblical interpretation we can see that scripture is highlighting a people and a place that are of immense importance to the LORD God of all creation. References to *Israel* alone greatly exceed the sum of all references throughout the Bible to *faith*, *hope*, *charity*, *love*, *sin*, *sacrifice* and *salvation*.

The critics counter this with the same sweeping assertion, namely that the church has **replaced** Israel and has become ‘My people’ in the eyes of the LORD. But this can be achieved just as easily by **adding** the church to the list. There is no need whatever to replace Israel. (This is exactly how the Apostle Paul addresses the question in his epistle to the Romans – which we will discuss shortly.)

When the LORD refers to *Israel*, *Jacob*, *David* and *Jerusalem* in his Holy Word, He is doing so in the context of the covenant that He made with Abraham. This means that *Israel* can only mean *Israel*, *Jacob* can only mean *Jacob*, *David* can only mean *David*, and *Jerusalem* can only mean *Jerusalem*. Once they are removed from this context – namely the fulfilment in due course of the Abrahamic covenant – they lose their meaning.

A correct understanding of the Abrahamic covenant is therefore crucial to a correct understanding of the Bible as a whole. Unfortunately, in my experience only a small minority of Christians have actually studied the covenant, how it was solemnized, and the various occasions thereafter when it was confirmed.

Here is the key passage from scripture:

Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. Then He said to him, “I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.” **And he said, “Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?”** So He said to him, “Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” **Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.** And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. Now when the sun was going down, **a deep sleep fell upon Abram;** and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” **And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.**

(Genesis 15:5-17)

The LORD asked Abram (who was not yet called Abraham) to take three animals and two birds, but He did not specify what he should do with them. However, in accordance with a well-established custom, Abraham knew what to do. The traditional way of sealing a covenant, particularly where a matter of great importance was concerned, was to sacrifice a number of domestic animals and prepare a large fire for their carcasses. The fire, with its sacrificial pieces, was in two parts, with a narrow path between them. The covenant was sealed when both parties walked between the burning sacrifice. A covenant confirmed in this way was irrevocable.

The LORD gave confirmation of the practice itself when, in the book of Jeremiah, he said:

And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, **when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it** – the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land **who passed between the parts of the calf** (Jeremiah 34:18-19)

The procedure in Genesis departed from the traditional formula in one very significant respect – only *one* of the two parties walked through the fire. The Lord had put Abraham into a very deep sleep, thereby preventing his participation, and then proceeded to seal the covenant with Himself.

The *smoking oven* (fire pot) and *burning torch* in the final verse refer, respectively, to the coming tribulations of His chosen people and to His divine presence with them at all times.

In order that the church would understand the immutable and irrevocable nature of the covenant which the LORD had made with Abraham and his descendants forever, He gave the following clarification in Hebrews 6:13-20:

For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. **Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath**, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Could anything be clearer? “He swore by Himself.” The covenant is irrevocable and everlasting. It depends on nothing but God’s sovereign will. There is nothing man can do to annul or revoke this solemn commitment. And it must come to pass because, as the Apostle reminds us, it is “impossible for God to lie.”

Now let’s examine the specific promises that God made by covenant to Abraham.

The Abrahamic Covenant

We’ll begin with its initial pronouncement:

Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:1-3)

The key fact that must be considered here is that the covenant was given without *any* conditions attached. None whatsoever. It is essential that one recognise this since the whole of Replacement Theology is predicated on the belief that one was somehow implied. It should also be noted that the LORD did not specify *when* the covenant would ultimately be fulfilled. However, since it was not fulfilled at the First Coming of Christ, the proponents of Replacement Theology have assumed that the covenant with the Jewish people has lapsed. They have inserted a termination date into the covenant even though none was specified.

We also know that the promise of the covenant, once it has been realized, will endure forever:

And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: “Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are – northward, southward, eastward, and westward; **for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever**. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.” (Genesis 13:14-17)

Note that word, *forever*. Some believe that this could not possibly mean ‘for a time without end’ since the Jewish people were subsequently evicted from their land for rejecting their Messiah. They reason that there must have been a condition attaching to the covenant, namely, that the descendants of Abraham would ultimately have to accept the Messiah when he came. But this is a serious error. In the eyes of the LORD, his chosen people have never ceased to be the true inheritors of the land and the promises given by Him to Abraham. Their eviction from the Promised Land by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and then the Romans, which the LORD imposed on them on foot of their disobedience as a nation, was certainly a very severe judgment, but it neither contravened nor compromised the covenant in any way.

Indeed, Deuteronomy tells us that such a judgment *would* befall the Jewish people if they departed from God's holy law, but that their banishment would **not** be permanent:

Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, **that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.** (Deuteronomy 30:1-5)

Many of the prophets foretold a time when the children of Israel would be scattered to the uttermost parts of the earth but that the LORD would eventually bring them back again to the Promised Land. He would do this, not because of any intrinsic merit or righteousness on their part, but for *His* name's sake:

But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went. Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: **I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake**, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. **And I will sanctify My great name**, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. (Ezekiel 36:21-28)

It beggars belief that the advocates of Replacement Theology could try to allegorise a passage such as this and apply it to the church. The church has never been banished from the land that it possessed – for the LORD *never* granted a tract of land to the church. But the LORD **did** give a tract of land to the children of Israel, and he **did** scatter them to the far corners of the earth, and he **did** bring them back again to their own land. And at some future date he will cleanse them exactly as stated and live physically among them, exactly as stated.

The Book of Zechariah is an astonishing depiction of this latter event, the Second Coming of Christ.

Many who allegorise the word of God have a disturbing tendency to ignore passages that challenge their artificial method of interpretations. Take the following, for example:

Then say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; **they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.** They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God. David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. (Ezekiel 37:21-24)

The church has never existed as two nations. Indeed, it makes no sense to conceive of the church as a nation, and the New Testament never suggests anything of the kind. So to which two nations is this passage referring? This ought to be obvious since their vicissitudes play such a prominent role in several books of the Old Testament. They are, of course, the northern kingdom of Samaria which was overrun by the Assyrians in 722 BC and the southern kingdom of Judea which was conquered by the Babylonians in 606 BC. They were one nation in the time of Solomon but were torn asunder after his death by internecine strife.

Now consider the remaining verses in that chapter:

Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince **forever**. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an **everlasting covenant** with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst **forevermore**. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst **forevermore**. (Ezekiel 37:25-28)

Could our Heavenly Father have made His intentions any more explicit? What possible construction could one place on words like *forever*, *everlasting* and *forevermore*, except what they plainly mean? It takes a truly rebellious attitude to even *want* to construe a passage such as this in an allegorical manner in order to meet the constraints imposed by a spurious five-word proposition.

When people play with the word of God they are playing with fire.



The Davidic Covenant

As the advent of the Messiah drew closer, the LORD added a further covenant to those he had already made with Israel. This was conveyed to David through the prophet Nathan and is known as the Davidic Covenant. It enlarges upon the promises made in Genesis:

Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house. “When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, **and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.** I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. **And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.**” According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David. (2 Samuel 7:10-17)

Here the LORD is telling David that he will establish his dynasty – his “house” – on an everlasting basis. If some of the kings in this lineage depart from His holy law, they will be punished “with the rod of men”, but the line itself will continue – “But my mercy shall not depart from him”. Note verse 16 in particular: “And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.”

Following the principle of repetition in Biblical interpretation, we note in particular the words of Psalm 89:

I have found My servant David; with My holy oil I have anointed him, with whom My hand shall be established; also My arm shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not outwit him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him. I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague those who hate him. But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, and in My name his horn shall be exalted. Also I will set his hand over the sea, and his right hand over the rivers. He shall cry to Me, ‘You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.’ Also I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. **My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him. His seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, if they break My statutes And do not keep My commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: his seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; it shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky.** Selah (Psalm 89:20-37)

What a truly glorious affirmation of His covenant! Its permanency is emphasized to the utmost. The LORD acknowledges that the children of Israel will likely depart from his law and his judgments and will break his statutes and his commandments – and will be punished accordingly. But then comes that magnificent word – **“Nevertheless...”!**

This is why I consider Replacement Theology at core to be, not just an aberrant method of Biblical interpretation, but a disturbing expression of the rebelliousness and perversity of man’s fallen nature. How can anyone, of any persuasion or any denomination, see fit to amend, dilute or pervert the extraordinary promise that the LORD made to David in the above passage when he said? –

Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: his seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; it shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky.

The New Covenant

In addition to the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, the LORD made a further covenant with Israel. It is described as the ‘New Covenant’ (*brit chadashah*) by Jeremiah and mentioned also by Isaiah and Ezekiel. The New Covenant does not supersede or replace the Abrahamic or Davidic covenants but adds to the promises that the LORD has already made.

Note that this covenant is *also* unconditional. The LORD emphasises this by comparing its theoretical dissolution to the departure of the sun, the moon and the stars from the course in which He has set them – in other words an absurdity:

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.** No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. **For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.** Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar; the LORD of hosts is His name: **If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the LORD, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever.** Thus says the LORD: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the LORD. (Jeremiah 31:31-37)

The New Covenant is described in the following terms by Ezekiel and Isaiah, respectively:

Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: **I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake,** which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. **For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.** (Ezekiel 36:22-28)

The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob, says the LORD. As for Me, says the LORD, **this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants, says the LORD, from this time and forevermore.** (Isaiah 59:20-21)

The Word of God also refers to the New Covenant in Jeremiah 50:4-5, Ezekiel 34:25-30 and Ezekiel 37:21-28.

The Book of Hebrews confirms that the New Covenant will replace the Old, namely the Mosaic Covenant, since it alone is specified. But it will *not* replace the Abrahamic or Davidic Covenants:

Because finding fault with them, He says: Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – **not according to the covenant [i.e. the Mosaic Covenant] that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt;** because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. For this is the **covenant** that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. **For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.** (Hebrews 8:8-13)

These passages of scripture are truly remarkable. In bold and striking terms the LORD is stating that it is his unconditional intention to return the children of Israel to the Promised Land, to forgive them their iniquities, to cleanse them of all impurity, and to put his Spirit within them. Though they did not accept their Messiah at his First Coming, they will accept him at his Second Coming.

Note too the opening statement in Ezekiel, **"I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake."** This underlines the unconditionality of the covenant and gives the reason why the LORD is doing what he is doing – for His name's sake. Just as the LORD demonstrated his sovereign power to the heathen when he led the children of Israel out of Egypt, despite their disobedience and rebellious behaviour, so too will he vindicate his holy name at the end of the age by fulfilling ALL of his promises to the faithful remnant of Israel.

This will be the Kingdom – the *earthly* Kingdom – that the Old Testament referred to innumerable times, that John the Baptist had been expecting, that the Apostles had enquired about so often, and that Christ confirmed he would come and establish when the children of Israel finally proclaimed the words, **“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”!** (Matthew 23:39).

Isaiah was referring to this glorious day in the following passage, when Christ would reign in person as world ruler from his capital in Jerusalem:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:2-3).

[For ease of reference a summary of the Covenants which the LORD made with Israel is set out in **Appendix A.**]



Understanding the Church

Some advocates of Replacement Theology contend that the church existed in the Old Testament, albeit in a less complete form than it did after Pentecost. In this way they argue that the church was always the immediate recipient of the covenants that God had made with Israel, but that Israel herself had fallen away and forfeited those elements which had been specific to her, such as the possession in perpetuity of the Promised Land.

This is a clever formulation of Replacement Theology because it avoids the need to prove that the church inherited the promises that the nation of Israel had allegedly forfeited when she rejected the Messiah. Instead it subtly appropriates those same promises from the earliest times by pretending to be ‘enfolded’ in some sense in the concept of Israel. (Covenant Theology – *see below* – tries to give this a theological basis.)

However, this argument too is seriously flawed. The church came into being at Pentecost and was not present in the Old Testament. This is why the Apostle Paul referred to it as a “mystery,” something that had not previously been revealed. The church is the body of the resurrected Christ and each born-again Christian, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, is a member of that body. This means that the church could never have existed in the Old Testament in any form. If it had then Paul would not have been able to call it a “mystery.” Christ gave confirmation of this when he said “...and upon this rock [namely Himself] I *will* build my church...” (Matthew 16:18). The future tense shows that the church had not been established at that point in time.

Paul referred to the “great mystery” as the marital relationship that now exists between Christ and the church:

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:30-32)

The Apostle used a large part of his letter to the Romans – chapters 9-11 – to explain how the church, the newly formed mystery, differed from Israel. In it he shows that a clear distinction must be drawn between the totality of those who have descended from Abraham through Jacob – which we would today regard as the global community of ethnic Jews – and the elect subset among them who were and are true believers in the LORD God of Israel.

He begins by asking the fundamental question, the question at the core of Replacement Theology, namely, “has God cast away His people?” The advocates of Replacement Theology answer this with a resounding *Yes!* But Paul says exactly the opposite:

I say then, has God cast away His people? **Certainly not!** For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life? But what does the divine response say to him? I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. **Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.** And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. (Romans 11:1-6)

There is nothing man can do, not even the Jews, to thwart the will of God. Scripture declares that the LORD has, through His unfathomable grace, reserved unto Himself a remnant of true believers among the ethnic descendants of Abraham through Jacob; that he views this remnant as Israel; and that he will fulfil through them every one of the promises that he made to Abraham and David.

It should be obvious that this remnant is **not** part of the church since otherwise little of what Paul is saying in chapters 9-11 of Romans would make any sense. Also, it must be remembered that this confirmation of the continuance of God's special covenant-relationship with the nation of Israel was made many years after she rejected the Messiah. Thus, the great Apostle to the Gentiles is reassuring his readers that the unconditional covenants that the LORD had made with their nation did not lapse at the Crucifixion.

[It also means that Jews who accept Christ are still covered by the Land Covenant, while Gentile Christians are not and never will be. This helps to highlight the distinctive way in which the LORD is dealing with these two groups of believers.]

In chapter 11 the Apostle describes the entire congregation of true believers, from the earliest days to the end of time, as an olive tree. Israel comprises the root and trunk of the tree, as well as the natural branches, while the church comprises a set of wild (or uncultivated) branches which have been grafted in. The root and trunk of the tree can accommodate all of ethnic Israel, but the majority of Jews rejected the opportunity to continue as a natural branch. The LORD had therefore cut them off temporarily and replaced them with Gentile believers, known collectively as the church.

Here is how Paul explained it:

For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, **being a wild olive tree**, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, **remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.** You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into **their own olive tree**? For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this **mystery**, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that **blindness** in part has happened to Israel until **the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.** (Romans 11:16-25)

Both the natural branches and the engrafted branches are of equal standing in the eyes of the LORD, but His plans for each are not identical.

When the Apostle makes reference to “the fullness of the Gentiles” he is referring to the total number of Gentiles who will ultimately be grafted onto the olive tree. At the point when this number is reached, shortly before the Second Coming of Christ, the church will be physically withdrawn (‘snatched’) from the earth in an event known as the Rapture (*Harpazo* in the original Greek) and the “blindness” which currently afflicts the believing remnant of Israel will be removed. Then the world will witness the astonishing events described in the Book of Zechariah and the Book of Revelation.



***Israel* is never used as a synonym for the church**

There is not a single instance anywhere in the Bible where the word *Israel*, as a collective term, refers to anything other than the Jewish people as an ethnic group, whether to all descendants of Abraham through Jacob, to the tribes of the Northern Kingdom only, or to the faithful remnant only. The advocates of Replacement Theology contend that the church replaced Israel after Pentecost. However, even though the word ‘Israel’ occurs no fewer than 42 times in the New Testament in relation to events occurring after Pentecost, never once is the church being referred to, either in tandem with Israel or in place of Israel.

The New Testament consistently refers to the nation of Israel as ‘Israel’ or ‘Jacob’ even after the establishment of the church. In his analysis of Israel and its relationship with the LORD following the creation of the church, the Apostle Paul makes the following definitive statement:

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins. (Romans 11:25-27)

The ‘fullness of the Gentiles’ will mark the end of the age, at which point Christ shall return and take away all ‘ungodliness’ from Jacob (Israel) in accordance with his ‘covenant with them.’ What could be plainer? The mystery that Paul is referring to is the church, not Israel. The latter continues to exist and to retain its relationship under covenant with the LORD.

The Remnant of Israel

In order to understand fully what the LORD means when he speaks of Israel, it is important to recognise that it comprises, not just direct blood descendants of Jacob, but anyone adopted into one of the twelve tribes or inducted through marriage. Thus Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute, became one of the children of Israel through assimilation. As though to emphasize her sinful nature even further, we find that her name meant 'Egypt'. And yet she figured in the bloodline of Joseph, the husband of the earthly mother of Jesus. Another Gentile, the Moabitess Ruth, also figured in the same bloodline.

Hebrews 11:31 tells us that Rahab's faith had saved her (along with her parents and brothers). We also know that Ruth married a Jew and converted to Judaism. Thus in each case Gentiles became Jews through faith. And their 'Jewishness' was no less than that of other Jews in the eyes of the LORD. In Biblical Jewish adoption, the person who has been adopted is considered to have been born into the household and there is no requirement, in tables of genealogy, to distinguish between natural birth and incorporation by adoption

God also provided for the admission of Gentile servants "bought for money" into the "congregation of Israel" when he permitted them to eat the Passover. These had to be circumcised first, circumcision being the outward sign of election for all Jewish males:

And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner shall eat it. But every man's servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it. A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat it. In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.
(Exodus 12:43-47)

Paul referred to this method of adoption when he said that all members of the church were bought with a price – "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men." (1 Corinthians 7:23 KJV) Through faith we became the servants of Christ who paid the price for our sins. In this way we are grafted onto the olive tree of God's elect. And we are not asked to undergo outward circumcision since the New Covenant requires circumcision of one's heart only (namely regeneration).

We can see therefore that even in the Old Testament there was clear, albeit limited, provision for the inclusion of believing Gentiles among God's elect.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul equates the salvation of a proportion only of the Gentiles through faith with the salvation of a proportion only of the Jews through faith:

As He says also in Hosea: I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, You are not My people, there they shall be called sons of the living God. Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. (Romans 9:25-27)

In rejecting Replacement Theology, one must not make the mistake of ascribing a separate means of salvation to the remnant of Israel. Both Jew and Gentile are saved in exactly the same way, through faith in the blood of Christ. (Old Testament saints were saved through their faith in God's Word and His promises, which anticipated the future sacrificial atonement of Christ.)

The LORD has provided only one means of salvation for fallen man and that is through the substitutionary atonement of His only begotten Son. Contemporary Jews who have not yet come to Christ are as much in need of earnest evangelism as non-Christians of any persuasion.

The Return and Protection of the Remnant of Israel

The LORD tells us many times in his Holy Word that he will gather the scattered children of Israel from the far corners of the world and bring them once again to the Promised Land. He says that it will be such a momentous event, such an astonishing demonstration of his power and sovereignty, that in the eyes of the world it will supersede the events described in Exodus:

It shall come to pass **in that day** that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to **recover the remnant** of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and **the islands of the sea**. He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from **the four corners of the earth**. (Isaiah 11:11-12)

Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, and **gather you** from the west; I will say to the north, 'Give them up,' and to the south, 'Do not keep them back.' **Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth – everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him.** (Isaiah 43:5-7)

Therefore behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, that it shall no more be said, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel **from the land of Egypt**,' but, 'The LORD lives who **brought up** the children of Israel **from the land of the north and from all the lands** where He had driven them.' For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers. (Jeremiah 16:14-15)

For thus says the LORD: Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, ‘O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel!’ **Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth,** among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and the one who labors with child, together; a great throng shall return there. (Jeremiah 31:7-8)

I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. **I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them, says the LORD your God.** (Amos 9:14-15)

We know that these related passages are not referring to the return from the Babylonian captivity because (i) that return was only partial (the majority of Jews remained in Babylon and only three tribes – Judah, Benjamin and Levi – were affected), (ii) it was not marked by miraculous events remotely like those associated with the Exodus from Egypt, and (iii) it was concerned with the return of a Jewish remnant from only one geographical location.

Rather, these five related passages are referring to the End Time because (i) Isaiah uses the marker phrase “in that day” (which we will discuss in greater detail below), (ii) the regathering is from the far corners of the world (“islands of the sea,” “four corners of the earth,” “ends of the earth,” “all the lands”), (iii) it will comprehend all the tribes of Israel, and (iv) they will never again be removed from the Promised Land.

We should note also that Isaiah 43 includes a remarkable reference to the unique relationship, both tender and paternal, that has existed between the Living God and His chosen people since the time of Abraham:

Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth – everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him. (Isaiah 43:5-7)

The foundation of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948, was a monumental landmark in Bible prophecy. The children of Israel, who had been returning in ever increasing numbers to the Promised Land since the 1880s, were once again in control of part of the territory which the LORD had given them some 4000 years earlier, for an everlasting possession.

The return described in the five passages above is the great global migration of Jews to the Promised Land that will occur *after* Christ comes back to earth to rule His kingdom. The waves of migration which led to the foundation of Israel in 1948, as well as the return of many Jews thereafter, is not a fulfilment of these specific passages but of prophecies relating to the reestablishment of Israel as a secular state, notably the ‘dry bones’ prophecy of Ezekiel 37.

Moses foretold this great End Time return and the severity of God's judgment on His wayward people in Deuteronomy 28. We know from the Book of Revelation that the final and most severe segment of this judgment will come in the seven year Tribulation period. However, Moses also reminded the children of Israel that they would one day comprise one of the largest nations on earth:

The LORD your God has multiplied you, and here you are today, as the stars of heaven in multitude. May the LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times more numerous than you are, and bless you as He has promised you. (Deuteronomy 1:10-11)

When one considers that the children of Israel at that time comprised 600,000 men, plus their wives and little ones, the nation as a whole would have been at or very close to two million in population. Moses said the LORD had promised to make them many times greater than this, by a factor of a thousand. This means that the numbers of believing Jews on earth at some time in the future will be at least two billion, and possibly more.

The tendency of modern Christians to focus almost exclusively on the New Testament, as though it had replaced or superseded the Old Testament, is a tragedy of Biblical exegesis. The Bible is one book with one Author. Much of the New Testament cannot be understood without a proper understanding of the Old Testament. It is even misleading to say, as many do, that the Old is the New concealed and the New is the Old revealed, because this too suggests that the New Testament is somehow defining what the Old 'really' meant. This is a serious mistake. All parts of the Bible need to be considered when interpreting the meaning of any particular passage and deciding its contribution to the totality of God's Word. For example, Revelation, the last book of the Bible, can only be fully understood through a careful examination of several books of the Old Testament, including Daniel, Zechariah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Exodus and Genesis.

One of the most serious examples of this kind of error may be found in the Gospel of Luke:

Then the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. (Luke 1:30-33)

Most Christians are content to interpret this passage as a straightforward confirmation that the child which the woman will bear is the long-awaited Messiah. But they hardly notice that it is *also* a confirmation of the four unconditional promises in the Davidic Covenant. These four promises are as follows:

	Promise	Passage in Luke, Chapter 1
1.	An eternal dynasty will be established in the Promised Land, in the line of David.	“the throne <u>of His father David</u> ”
2.	An eternal kingdom will be established in the Promised Land, governed by the eternal dynasty.	“and of <u>His kingdom</u> there will be <u>no end</u> ”
3.	An eternal throne will be established in Jerusalem, the dynastic seat of government in the eternal kingdom.	“ <u>the Lord God will give Him the throne</u> of His father David.”
4.	An eternal person, fully man and fully God, will rule the world from the eternal throne in Jerusalem.	“the <u>Son of the Highest</u> ...And He will reign over the <u>house of Jacob</u> forever”

Not only were they unfulfilled at the conception of the infant Jesus but they remain unfulfilled to this day!

This is why it is essential that Christians continue to study earnestly the literal truth of the Word of God and not be tempted to allegorise passages that they do not fully understand.

Not only will the LORD fulfil every one of His promises to Abraham and David, as well as the New Covenant promise in Jeremiah, but He will do so exactly in the terms which the Jews of Old Testament times would have understood, namely, that the Messiah will return and rule here on earth in human form as king of the nation of Israel, that his throne, the throne of David, will be in Jerusalem, that every knee will bow before him, and that his kingdom will have no end. To allegorise any of this is to contend that the LORD was not speaking to His people about matters of the utmost importance in terms they could understand.

Most professing Christians today have allegorised so many parts of the Bible, and have adopted interpretations of the New Testament which so distort or misconstrue the plain meaning of the Old Testament, that the Second Coming – to the extent that they believe in it at all – is seen as a quasi-mystical event which brings the whole of history to a heart-warming conclusion. They reject the Resurrection of the church-age saints who died in Christ, the Rapture of the living saints, the huge global catastrophe known as the Tribulation, the massive attack on the nation of Israel by the forces of the Antichrist, the supernatural preservation of the believing remnant of Israel for three and a half years, the actual physical return of Christ to defeat Satan, the False Prophet and the Antichrist, and the Millennial reign of Christ from the holy city of Jerusalem.

Christians should be sufficiently humble and God-fearing to acknowledge that God will keep his word, that He will honour every one of his promises to the children of Israel, and that he will do exactly what he said he will do – to the last detail. “I the LORD have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it” – Ezekiel 24:14.

Jerusalem, the Holy City

Jerusalem and its eventual elevation to the principal city on earth is one such ‘detail’.

This special city matters to the LORD because He has chosen Zion for His holy habitation. This ought to be a truth of profound significance to Christians everywhere, but sadly this is not the case. Through the subversive influence of Replacement Theology they have neglected to consider the many occasions throughout scripture where the LORD has accorded an extraordinary spiritual status to this ancient city. Again and again his Holy Word makes it perfectly clear that He intends to raise Jerusalem to an exalted status in the Millennium Age, the thousand-year reign of Christ.

God Himself chose the location for the city:

Thus says the Lord GOD: This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her. (Ezekiel 5:5)

It is the city where God chose to put His name:

...Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. (1 Kings 14:21)

And it is the city wherein God has stated He would dwell forever:

For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place:
This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
(Psalm 132:13-14)

This is why Satan covets Jerusalem and will do all he can to occupy and control her. The ongoing conflict in the Middle East can only be understood when one realises that Satan is doing everything in his power to wrench Jerusalem from the Jews.

Jerusalem is the only city in the world where the LORD has at any time placed his Shekinah Glory, the visible manifestation of His Holy Presence:

When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD’s house. When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised the LORD, saying: For He is good, for His mercy endures forever. (2 Chronicles 7:1-3)

The Shekinah Glory dwelt in Jerusalem from the time that Solomon dedicated the Temple, around 950 BC, until some years before the destruction of the Temple in 586 BC, when it departed from the city (See Ezekiel chapters 9-11).

Isaiah tells us that the Shekinah Glory will shine forth once again with the return of the incarnate Christ to Jerusalem:

Arise, shine; for your light has come! And **the glory of the LORD is risen upon you**. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but **the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you**. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isaiah 60:1-3)

Gentiles will travel from the far corners of the globe to visit Jerusalem and witness the Shekinah Glory for themselves. While it was accessible only to the High Priest in former times, and then only on the Day of Atonement, it will now be visible to all who come to the Holy City, just as it was during the forty years of the Exodus. Isaiah and Zechariah confirmed this when they wrote:

When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, **a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night**. (Isaiah 4:4-5)

And there was the angel who talked with me, going out; and another angel was coming out to meet him, who said to him, “Run, speak to this young man, saying: ‘Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. **For I,’ says the LORD, ‘will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’**” (Zechariah 2:3-5)

It is the city where the Son of God conducted a vital portion of his earthly ministry and where he suffered a cruel death to save mankind from perdition. The LORD even calls Jerusalem “My city”, “the holy city” and, through the pen of the Psalmist, “the city of our God” and “the joy of the whole earth”:

I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways; He shall build **My city** and let My exiles go free, not for price nor reward, says the LORD of hosts. (Isaiah 45:13)

Awake, awake; put on your strength, O Zion; Put on your beautiful garments, **O Jerusalem, the holy city**: for the uncircumcised and the unclean shall no longer come to you. (Isaiah 52:1)

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in **the city of our God**, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, **the joy of the whole earth**, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. (Psalm 48:1-2 KJV)

Reflect for a moment on the destructive power of Replacement Theology and the remarkable way it has obliterated the true meaning of passages such as these. A five-word pinch of yeast has leavened the entire corpus of unfulfilled prophecy and turned profound truths into poetic metaphors.

A literal reading of the Word of God confirms that, during the Millennium Age, after the horrors of the Tribulation have passed, the beautiful city of Jerusalem will truly become “the joy of the whole earth.”

The Messiah even addressed the city as the one who had rejected him and to whom he would not return until she called upon him for deliverance:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, **Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD.** (Matthew 23:37-39)

Satan is doing all he can to prevent the Jewish people, as a nation, from issuing this contrite supplication to the LORD. Replacement Theology and the allegorization of God’s Holy Word are just two of the many devious stratagems that he is using to achieve this objective.

Covenant Theology is another.

Covenant Theology – another artificial device

In an attempt to circumvent the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, some champions of Replacement Theology have proposed that God must have been working to a set of higher covenants which were not subject in any way to human caprice. Even though these supposed covenants are not mentioned in scripture, they are inferred from God’s actual dealings with man. These theologians argue that God made an overarching covenant with himself, the covenant of Redemption, before the foundation of the world. This would be fulfilled in history through two subsidiary covenants, a covenant of works, whereby Adam and Eve would enjoy certain blessings provided they continued in obedience, and a covenant of grace whereby Christ would atone for man’s fallen state by taking his entire sin debt upon himself.

The problem with Covenant Theology, as it is called, is that it functions only as an interpretative framework. Instead of starting with what the Bible actually states, it infers that God must have had a comprehensive plan from the beginning and proceeded to implement it in full in accordance with his sovereign will. This may seem a reasonable assumption, but it gives priority to something that scripture does not actually state and then allows it to determine how all of God’s subsequent dealings with man, as stated in scripture, ought to be interpreted.

This is poor theology. By turning the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants into components of a bigger plan, it undermines their scriptural integrity and leaves them vulnerable to whatever distractions the mind of man might care to invent.

The beauty of Covenant Theology – from a Replacementist standpoint – is that it makes the five-word lie seem respectable. After all, if God’s covenants with Abraham and David are subject to a higher covenant, then no matter how irrevocable they may seem from a human perspective, their ultimate fulfillment – including the *way* they will be fulfilled – is determined by factors beyond our understanding. The only covenant that God is bound by is the one he allegedly made with himself before the foundation of the world. Everything thereafter is merely the predetermined expression of his sovereign will.

Since Covenant Theology goes beyond scripture, one is obliged to consult a theologian to tell us what God *really* meant. However the Bible wasn’t written for professional theologians. It was given in plain language, to be read and studied by common men and women, in a straightforward historical, literal and grammatical manner. And in those places where common sense is needed, we use our common sense. But we never add to, subtract from, or twist out of shape what the LORD has plainly written.

It should be obvious by now that Replacement Theology, Covenant Theology, and the allegorization of scripture go hand in hand. They work together toward a common goal, namely to replace the plain meaning of the Word of God with something more appealing to our fallen nature. It is no accident that all three are directed largely at the same target – Israel and the Jewish people. Replacement Theology replaces Israel in its entirety with the church; Covenant Theology undermines the integrity and permanency of the covenants that God made with Israel; and the allegorization of prophecy allows all of God’s promises, as they pertain to Israel, to be purged from the Word of God.

The Great Day of the LORD

Few Gentile Christians are taught that part of the Abrahamic Covenant applies directly to them. Believers everywhere should give close attention to Genesis 12:3 since it is just as current today as when the LORD first spoke these momentous words to Abraham:

I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

The LORD repeated the first part of this pronouncement in Numbers 9:24:

Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you.

We curse Israel when we distort what the LORD has revealed regarding her past, her present and her future, her relationship with God, and her ultimate deliverance from her enemies in the End Time.

If Christians are prepared to interpret the Word of God in a literal manner when it is of benefit to themselves, while at the same time rejecting a literal interpretation when it would benefit the children of Israel, then they are being dishonest.

Satan must be immensely satisfied. With just five words he has removed large parts of the Bible, destroyed the meaning of countless prophecies which have yet to be fulfilled, deceived the church as to her true position in the Biblical scheme for mankind, and induced millions of professing Christians to reject the LORD's stated purpose for Israel.

Only a little more deception is needed to turn rejection into contempt and contempt into hatred. The Book of Revelation confirms that this is precisely where the world is now heading, a concerted political and military attack by all nations upon Israel.

The Old Testament prophets called this chilling End Time scenario "the great day of the Lord."

A considerable portion of the Bible is given over to a prophetic description of the great day of the LORD. This refers to the events leading up to the Second Advent of the Messiah, the utter destruction of the Antichrist and his forces by the King of Kings, the permanent restoration of Israel, and the inauguration of the Millennial Kingdom. The Messiah will reign in the flesh in Jerusalem on the throne of David and rule the entire earth in strict accordance with His holy will.

The number of times the prophets refer to the Day of the LORD				
	"the day of the LORD"	"in that day"	"the last days"	"the latter days"
Isaiah	4	43	1	
Zechariah	1	20		
Ezekiel	2	7		1
Jeremiah	1	5		4
Zephaniah	6	3		
Amos	2	5		
Micah		5	1	
Joel	4	1		
Hosea		2		1
Obadiah	1	1		
Daniel				2
Haggai		1		
TOTAL	21	93	2	8

The terms “day of the LORD” and “in that day” refer to the same series of events. And these events are not in any sense symbolic, figurative or allegorical. Each and every one of them will come to pass exactly as the prophets foretold.

The number of times this “day” is mentioned by name – at least 124 times by 12 prophets – ought to highlight just how important it is in the eyes of God. And He wants us to know this!

A Challenge to Replacementists

If you are a hardened Replacementist and have difficulty coming to terms with the idea that the church has *not* replaced Israel, then I would invite you to undertake the simple test set out in **Appendix B**. Words relating specifically to Israel in End Time prophecy appear 22 times in chapter 12 of the Book of Zechariah. Your task is to replace each one with an appropriate reference to the church, in a consistent manner throughout. Naturally, your exposition should give a consistent interpretation of the chapter, in relation both to Zechariah as a whole and to the rest of scripture.

Please understand that this paper is not directed against sincere Christians who believe that the church has replaced Israel. They have been deceived by a lie. But it is definitely directed against those who preach and teach this lie even when they are familiar with the wealth of scripture which conflicts with their opinion. Given that a portion of the Promised Land was returned to the Jews in 1948, and that the Israelis assumed control of the entire city of Jerusalem in 1967 – in accordance with ancient Biblical prophecy – there is no excuse for Christians anywhere to remain under the thrall of Replacement Theology and its bogus interpretation of scripture.

Jeremy James
Ireland
16 December 2011

**For further information about Israel, the End Time, and
other aspects of born-again Biblical Christianity, visit
www.zephaniah.eu**

Copyright 2011.
**This paper may be copied and distributed in any form provided
no changes are made and the source is acknowledged.**

APPENDIX A

God's Covenants with Man

<i>Covenant</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Biblical Reference</i>	<i>God's promises to man (main features)</i>	<i>Current Status</i>
Edenic	Conditional	Genesis 1 and 2.	Man would have dominion over the earth and would not see death provided he did not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.	Void.
Adamic	Unconditional	Genesis 3.	God would send a Messiah, born of woman, to defeat Satan.	'Lamb' aspect complete. 'Lion' aspect yet to come.
Noahic	Unconditional	Genesis 9.	The world will never again be destroyed by a flood.	Ongoing. Rainbow given as sign of this covenant.
Abrahamic	Unconditional	Genesis 17.	Fivefold promise to Abraham: 1. to multiply his descendants into a great nation; 2. to bestow material and spiritual prosperity on this nation in the land of Canaan, which would remain in their possession forever; 3. to exalt Abraham's name among the nations; 4. to be the source of a great blessing upon the world (as the birth nation of the Messiah); 5. to bless all Gentiles who bless the nation and to curse all Gentiles who curse the nation.	Ongoing. Note that #5 applies directly to Gentiles.
Land	Unconditional	Deuteronomy 29 and 30.	A detailed reaffirmation of the land promise given to Abraham.	To be fulfilled in every detail in the Kingdom age.

Mosaic	Conditional	Exodus 23, 24 and 34.	<p>Subject to their observance of His laws, commandments, statutes and ordinances, the people of the nation Israel would enjoy God's constant care and protection, a multitude of blessings, and would be set high above all nations.</p> <p>Correspondingly, if they failed in their observance, they would suffer severe punishment – including eviction from the Promised Land for a protracted period – as specified in Deuteronomy 28.</p>	<p>Finished.</p> <p>[The destruction of the Temple in 70AD made it impossible for the Jewish people to continue to observe the Mosaic Law as prescribed.]</p> <p>Circumcision was given as a seal of this covenant.</p>
Davidic	Unconditional	2 Samuel 7 and 22. Psalm 89.	<p>The Davidic Covenant added further detail to the Adamic and Abrahamic Covenants. The House of David would be the royal line through which the Messiah would come. This House would rule forever on the throne of Israel.</p>	Ongoing.
New	Subject to personal faith in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the only begotten Son of God.	Jeremiah 31. Ezekiel 36.	<p>The day will come when the LORD will put his law in the heart of the House of Israel; he shall be their God and they shall all know him; he will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.</p> <p>The New Covenant replaces the Mosaic Covenant but comprehends and completes the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants as they relate to the faithful remnant of Israel.</p> <p>The New Covenant creates the New Man wherein Jew and Gentile alike are made sinless before God. [Ephesians 2:15]</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>This is the Covenant of which the church already partakes, not as a nation but as a collection of individual members in the body of Christ.</p> <p>Gentiles are adopted into the New Covenant and grafted onto the olive tree through their saving faith in Christ.</p>

APPENDIX B

Zechariah: Chapter 12 [KJV]

[1] The burden of the word of the LORD for **Israel**, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. [2] Behold, I will make **Jerusalem** a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against **Judah** and against **Jerusalem**. [3] And in that day will I make **Jerusalem** a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. [4] In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of **Judah**, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. [5] And the governors of **Judah** shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of **Jerusalem** shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God. [6] In that day will I make the governors of **Judah** like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and **Jerusalem** shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in **Jerusalem**. [7] The LORD also shall save the tents of **Judah** first, that the glory of the house of **David** and the glory of the inhabitants of **Jerusalem** do not magnify themselves against **Judah**. [8] In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of **Jerusalem**; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as **David**; and the house of **David** shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. [9] And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against **Jerusalem**. [10] And I will pour upon the house of **David**, and upon the inhabitants of **Jerusalem**, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. [11] In that day shall there be a great mourning in **Jerusalem**, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. [12] And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; [13] The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; [14] All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.

A short interpretation of this chapter is given here, based on its plain meaning:

1 The prophecy of the LORD for the children of Israel is now given. **2** When the nations [*of the world*] besiege the city of Jerusalem, they will encounter a great terror. **3** All peoples and nations that oppose Israel at that time will either be destroyed or incur severe retribution. **4** All who participate in this military attack against Jerusalem will be utterly routed, their minds deranged and their weapons destroyed. **5** The Jewish leaders will trust in the LORD and will take heart in the knowledge that the Jewish inhabitants of the city will do likewise. **6** The Jewish leaders will utterly destroy the vast armies gathered against them. **7** All of the Jews will share in the victory, not just the leadership. **8** The Messiah [“the angel of the LORD”] will defend and protect his people, empowering them by miraculous means so that even the weakest of them will be formidable. **9** The LORD will destroy both the armies themselves and the nations that sent them. **10** The LORD will pour His supernatural strength upon the Jewish people and save them from destruction. They will recognise the person of the LORD as the Messiah, Jesus Christ, whom they rejected. The shock of recognition will cause each individual Jew to mourn and weep bitterly. **11-14** The collective grief will fill the whole of Jerusalem and the entire region.

~ Bibliography ~

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Anderson, Robert | <i>The Coming Prince</i> , tenth edition, published by Kregel Classics |
| Barnhouse, Donald | <i>The Invisible War</i> , Zondervan, 1965 |
| Brennan, David | <i>The Israel Omen</i> , Teknon Publishing, 2009 |
| Broadbent, E H | <i>The Pilgrim Church</i> , 1931 |
| Cloud, David | <i>The Book of Revelation</i> , Way of Life Literature, 2007 |
| Cloud, David | <i>Israel: Past, Present and Future</i> , Way of Life Literature, 2010 |
| Diprose, Ronald | <i>Israel and The Church: The Origin and Effects of Replacement Theology</i> , Authentic Media, 1998 |
| Fruchtenbaum, Arnold | <i>The Footsteps of the Messiah</i> , Ariel Ministries, 2003 |
| Fruchtenbaum, Arnold | <i>Hebrew Christianity</i> , Canon Press, 1974 |
| Hunt, Dave | <i>A Woman Rides the Beast</i> , Harvest House Publishers, 1994 |
| Ironside, H A | <i>The Crowning Day: Talks on the Second Coming of Christ</i> , Delivered in London, 1938. |
| Ironside, H A | <i>Expository Commentary on the Book of Revelation</i> , 1920 |
| Larkin, Clarence | <i>The Book of Revelation</i> , 1919 |
| Lindsey, Hal | <i>The Late Great Planet Earth</i> , Zondervan Publishing House, 1970 |
| Lindsey, Hal | <i>The Road to Holocaust</i> , Bantam Books, 1989 |
| McClain, Alva | <i>The Greatness of the Kingdom</i> , BMH Books, 1959 |
| Pentecost, Dwight | <i>Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology</i> , Zondervan Publishing House, 1958 |
| Prasch, James J | <i>Israel, The Church and The Jews</i> , 21 st Century Press, 2007 |
| Ryrie, Charles | <i>Dispensationalism Today</i> , Moody Press, 1965 |
| Showers, Renald | <i>The Coming Apocalypse: A Study of Replacement Theology versus God's Faithfulness in the End-Times</i> , The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 2009 |
| Showers, Renald | <i>There Really Is a Difference: A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theology</i> , The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1990 |
| Unger, Merrill | <i>Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah's Glory</i> , Zondervan Publishing House, 1963 |